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LATEST TOXIC RELEASE INVENTORY SHOWS CONTINUED DECLINE CHEMICALS RELEASED INTO ENVIRONMENT

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The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency today issued the Toxic Release Inventory (TRI), the annual report on the amount of toxic chemicals released into the environment for facilities reporting in calendar year 2001. The report shows that toxic chemical releases continue to significantly decline across the United States. Total releases of chemicals nationwide decreased by 15.5 percent, or 1.05 billion pounds, from reporting year 2000 to 2001. Based on trends since the inception of TRI in 1988, chemical releases have decreased approximately 54.5 percent.

"The Toxics Release Inventory is one of the most important activities EPA completes each year. It is a tool that gives the American public information on chemical releases for their communities so that they can make informed decisions about protecting their environment," said Acting EPA Administrator Linda Fisher. "I am especially pleased that this year there are some innovative 'firsts' in the TRI, including a new mapping capability to make it easier to get information. The entire TRI database is on-line, and I encourage citizens to use our TRI Explorer tool, enter their state and county, and see the data for themselves."

Looking at all chemical releases, approximately 27 percent of chemicals were released to air, 4 percent to water, 4 percent to underground injection on- and off-site and 65 percent to land on- and off-site. For all industries, there was a decrease in releases of mercury to air by nearly 7 percent, and to water of 25.6 percent. As in previous years, releases from the metal mining industry in 2001 made up a substantial portion of all chemical releases—45 percent. However, the metal mining industry also had the largest absolute decrease, by 602.5 million pounds, a 20 percent decrease from their releases in 2000. Releases from chemical manufacturing industries accounted for 9.5 percent of all releases – about 94.7 million pounds, down 14.5 percent from 2000. About 17 percent of the releases were from electric utilities—about 98.3 million pounds—achieving an 8.5 percent decrease from 2000.

The report indicates some increases in emissions of particular chemicals, limited to a very small number of facilities, mainly due to changed reporting thresholds or one-time processes. For example, this year's report includes data that reflects a new 100 pound threshold for reporting of lead and lead compounds – previously, facilities only reported for lead if they manufactured or processed over 25,000 pounds or used over 10,000 pounds. Because of this reporting change, the total lead releases increased by 69 million pounds from 374 million pounds to 443 million pounds.

While there was a one year increase in the releases of dioxin reported to TRI, the overall long term trend is that levels of dioxin are decreasing. Three facilities accounted for almost three-quarters of all of dioxin releases in 2001. These increases in dioxin, in part due to one time maintenance at some of these facilities, were 49,714 grams for a total of 148,759 grams.

In filing reporting year 2001 chemical reports, over 10,000 TRI reporting facilities took advantage of EPA's interactive reporting software tool, called "TRI-ME" or "TRI Made Easy," which assists facilities in completing their TRI obligations by simplifying and expediting reporting and improving data quality.

The Toxics Release Inventory was established under the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act of 1986, and includes information on releases and other waste management for over 650 toxic chemicals and chemical categories. The data available today is based on reports from manufacturing industries, metal mines, certain coal mining activities, electrical utilities that burn coal and/or oil, hazardous waste treatment and disposal facilities, chemical wholesale distributors, petroleum bulk plants and terminals and solvent recovery services.

The TRI data and background information are available to the public at <http://www.epa.gov/tri> and the TRI explorer mapping tool is available at <http://www.epa.gov/triexplorer>